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ABSTRACT

The Program Assistance and Approval System (PAAS) is an attempt to fulfill the needs of the 1978 Louisiana Educational Accountability Act regarding improvements in schools and/or educational programs. The system is designed as an onsite review to (1) determine the degree of implementation of program standards, (2) assess areas of need, and (3) deliver technical assistance necessary for appropriate improvement. PAAS onsite reviews are conducted using a team of 15-20 personnel to review the mathematics, language arts, special education, and vocational education instructional programs; and the assistance and operations domains. The PAAS evaluation system is designed to be implemented either as a district self-review by school district personnel or as an accountability/compliance review by state department personnel. Its reports are in the form of a comprehensive profile of educational programs that facilitate coordination of instructional opportunities and programs across schools. An integral part of the system is the development of action plans that detail methods for change following the reviews. Technical assistance in developing action plans and implementing them is an essential component of this structured mechanism for improving educational programs. (Author/PN)

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# The Program Assistance and Approval System (PAAS): A Comprehensive Methodology for Evaluating School District Effectiveness

by

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Tm 820 782

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The Program Assistance and Approval System (PAAS):
A Comprehensive Methodology for Evaluating School District Effectiveness

The emphasis on educational accountability in the 1970's led many state departments of education to develop and implement extensive testing systems measuring basic skills and competencies needed for functioning in society. In some instances, mastery of these skills and competencies were incorporated into graduation requirements to ensure a minimum capability of citizens to cope with everyday problems. Results of minimum competency testing programs usually indicated strengths and weaknesses in differing skill areas. Differences also were apparent among schools within a district and across districts within states. These differences in performance have emphasized the need for a method of evaluating instructional and programmatic effectiveness at the school and district levels.

The Louisiana Educational Accountability Act (Act 621, 1978) established several methods for increasing accountability in the educational system, including minimum competency testing, systematic personnel evaluation, and a program review methodology. Development of the program review system began in 1978 with a study of accreditation and approval systems in other states. Most of these systems, including the school approval system in Louisiana, had standards that addressed primarily the inputs of an educational system, such as floor space, staff ratios, etc. Frequently standards were stated very broadly with little or no specifics that could be used to determine objectively whether or not the standard was met. Rarely were results from these processes used to make improvements in the schools or educational programs. Thus, the Louisiana

Department of Education decided that a new program review system was needed that would have:

* Generic standards that could be applied in areas of mathematics, language arts, special education, and vocational education emphasizing instructional processes and results as well as inputs
* A valid, reliable review method that was explicit, standardized, and conducted onsite in the school districts
* Objective, competent, trained personnel for implementation who would operate within a team structure
* A set of procedures for planning, conducting, and reporting the onsite reviews
* A system of remedies for ensuring timely amelioration of any identified deviations from the standards

The Bureau of Development, Office of Research and Development, coordinated the development of this system which was entitled the Program Assistance and Approval System (PAAS). The consulting firm of Evaluation Systems Design, Inc. (ESDI) was employed to assist with the conceptualization and development of the system. Three basic purposes of PAAS are to:

* improve the quality of education in schools and districts
* assure that basic skills are learned by students, and
* assure that equal opportunities are available for all students

The system is designed as an onsite review to 1) determine the degree of implementation of program standards, 2) assess areas of need, and 3) deliver technical assistance necessary for appropriate improvement. Components of the PAAS system are presented visually in Figure 1. PAAS onsite reviews are conducted using a set of 60 standards. Figure 2 presents an example of one standard from the PAAS review. Each standard is operationalized by 3-7 criteria. All criteria have specific review evidence stated to be used by reviewers in arriving at a judgment on whether or not the criterion is in place in schools or the district level of a school system.

## PAAS REVIEW

| STANDARDS & SITES | DOMAINS FOR STANDARDS & REVIEWS | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | INSTRUCTION | ASSISTANCE | OPERATIONS |
| 43 STANDARDS FOR SCHOOLS (72%) | INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGN 6 | ASSISTANCE DESIGN 7 | SCHOOL OPERATIONS 6 |
| | INSTRUCTIONAL DELIVERY 6 | ASSISTANCE DELIVERY 5 | SCHOOL MANAGEMENT 4 |
| | INSTRUCTIONAL MANAGEMENT 5 | ASSISTANCE COORDINATION 4 | |
| 17 STANDARDS CENTRAL OFFICE (28%) | INSTRUCTIONAL DIRECTION 5 | ASSISTANCE DIRECTION 5 | CENTRAL OFFICE OPERATIONS 7 |
| TOTAL = 60 | 22 (37%) | 21 (35%) | 17 (28%) |

Figure 1. Domains for PAAS Standards.

# 1.1.1 INSTRUCTIONAL SCOPE AND SEQUENCE

A continuous program of skills, concepts, and instruction is planned and implemented to meet the individual needs of students within and across all sequential courses and grade levels.

| CRITERIA | REVIEW EVIDENCE |
|---|---|
| 1. SCOPE AND SEQUENCE: Teachers use the parish adopted written scope and sequence in planning daily instruction. * | P - Obtain a copy of the document containing the parish adopted scope and sequence and review it to determine that a scope and sequence is being used for the program area under review.<br>P - Examine the teacher's plans for daily instruction to determine that the adopted scope and sequence is being used in planning.<br>O - Observe to verify that the teacher is using the scope and sequence in the delivery of instruction. |
| 2. MINIMUM STANDARDS: Minimum student performance standards established by the state are included in appropriate courses and levels. * | P - Examine copies of the state minimum performance standards or state special minimum performance standards. Verify that the minimum performance standards appropriate for the class being reviewed are included in the teacher's plans for daily instruction or IEP. |
| 3. PASSING CRITERIA: Established school or parish criteria for passing a course or mastering IEP skills are used by the teacher. * | P - Verify that criteria have been established through written school or parish guidelines, and are used by the teacher to determine when a student has completed requirements for exit from the course or IEP. These criteria should specify exit levels for individuals (e.g., 70% passing). |
| 4. INDIVIDUALIZATION OF INSTRUCTION: The physical and mental maturity of students are taken into account in implementing the course of instruction. * | P - Examine a sample of at least 3 IEP's, lesson plans, or student work to determine that modification in the type and number of skills to be mastered occurs in accordance with the ability and physical and mental maturity of individual students. |
| 5. PUPIL PROGRESSION PLAN: Criteria specified in the pupil progression plan, including those based on minimum competency testing, are used by the teacher in recommending student promotions. * | P - Examine a sample of at least 2 of last year's recommendations for promotion and non-promotion. Determine that the recommendations are based on criteria (including minimum competency testing) in the pupil progression plan.<br>T - Ask to determine that the teacher is aware of and uses the parish adopted promotion criteria for the class under review. |



Figure 2. Example of a Standard.

Onsite reviews are conducted using a team of 15-20 personnel to review the mathematics, language arts, special education, and vocational education instructional programs and the assistance and operations domains. Reviews include collection of physical evidence, observations in classrooms, and interviews with teachers, principals, supervisors, guidance counselors, and directors of the programs. Reviews last approximately one week for small to medium size districts. Team size varies with the number of schools and students in the district.

The evaluation plan for PAAS consisted of extensive technical review, formative evaluation, and summative evaluation conducted during the field testing phase of the development. Standards were developed on a staggered schedule beginning in the fall of 1979. Each standard was subjected to internal staff review and technical review by 10-30 staff from the Louisiana State Department of Education. Technical reviews were also provided by the Statewide Advisory Committee. Revisions were made based on the technical review summaries. Pilot testing of each standard was conducted in at least 2 schools with another revision cycle. The set of standards was also disseminated to all of the 66 parishes (districts) in Louisiana and professional organizations to determine the validity of the standards for measuring program status. This information was summarized by respondent and used in the final revision process.

Finally, field testing was conducted in 6 parishes in 1980-81. Field test evaluations consisted of evaluations of the process and the outcomes. Process evaluations included data collected from three sources: 1) reactions of the principals, teachers, and administators subjected to review and interviews; 2) reactions of the reviewers participating in the onsite and formula-

ting the judgments; and 3) observations of the process by ESDI and Bureau of Development staff to determine adherence to the established process and any needed revisions in the standards or the process.

Outcome evaluation consisted first of summarization of the district-wide results by criterion and by standard for each program reviewed. Summarizations across all six parishes were also made to determine success patterns indicative of state-level performance. Parish-level results were checked against district expectations to validate the judgments collected through the review. A separate study was conducted of the types of decision-rules to be used in determining success or failure on criteria and standards based on the quantitative data collected through the system.

The PAAS evaluation system is designed to be implemented either as a district self-review by school district personnel or as an accountability/compliance review by state department personnel. Through this system the monitoring activities of state personnel in academic programs, special education, and vocational education can be consolidated into one onsite review, thus reducing disruption of schools and district offices caused by multiple visits.

Reports from the evaluation system reviews are presented in the form of a comprehensive profile of educational programs that facilitate coordination of instructional opportunities and programs across schools. Topical areas of the report include instructional programs, student services, and operations and management. An example of one page of tabular data is provided in Figure 3.

An integral portion of the system is the development of action plans that detail methods for change following the reviews. Figure 4 contains an example of one completed page in an action plan. Technical assistance in developing action plans and implementing them is an essential component of the system.

## PAAS STANDARD

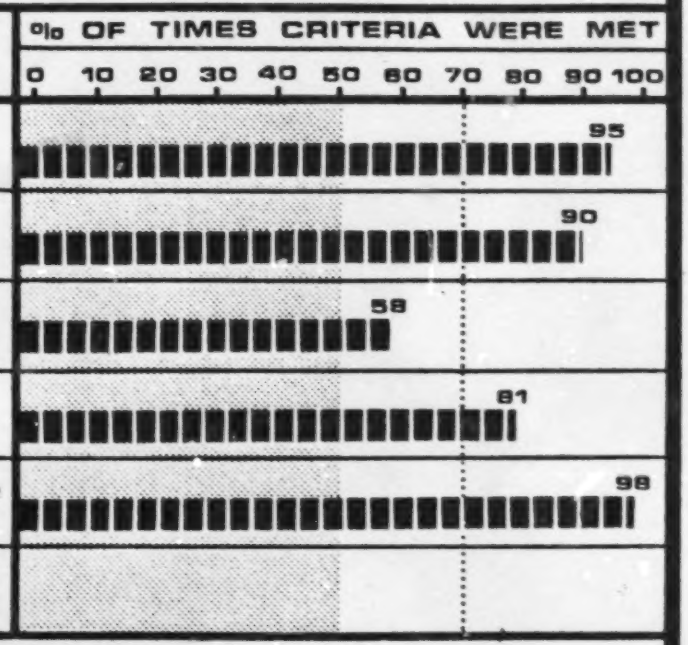
1.1.1 INSTRUCTIONAL SCOPE & SEQUENCE

A continuous program of skills, concepts, and instruction is planned and implemented to meet the individual needs of students within and across all sequential courses and grade levels.

## IMPORTANCE OF THE STANDARD

The scope and sequence of instruction provides the framework for the curriculum in an area of instruction. It specifies the major skills to be learned and the order in which they will be taught. It specifies both basic subject matter and the practice and enrichments to be covered. The logical flow, level of difficulty, and exposure time required to cover certain sets of skills provide a basis for defining levels and courses of instruction in a curricular area, which in turn provides a basis for pupil promotion criteria and parish pupil progression policies.

## CRITERIA FOR THE PAAS STANDARD




1. SCOPE AND SEQUENCE: Teachers use the parish adopted written scope and sequence in planning daily instruction.
2. MINIMUM STANDARDS: Minimum student performance standards established by the state are included in appropriate courses and levels.
3. PASSING CRITERIA: Established school or parish criteria for passing a course or mastering IEP skills are used by the teacher.
4. INDIVIDUALIZATION OF INSTRUCTION: The physical and mental maturity of students are taken into account in implementing the course of instruction.
5. PUPIL PROGRESSION PLAN: Criteria specified in the pupil progression plan, including those based on minimum competency testing, are used by the teacher in recommending student promotions.

## DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS AND EVIDENCE

Because all criteria were met more than 50% of the time and with an overall average of 85%, this standard is passed. Teachers are using the scope and sequence for courses/grade levels as approved by the local school board in 1980. A central part of the scope and sequence is the State Minimum Student Performance Standards which are covered in accordance with appropriate levels of difficulty in the courses and grade levels provided. Exceptions are the advanced courses which require mastery of all minimum skills as a condition for course grade levels or high school courses. These passing criteria were developed by a parish-wide committee which included teachers, parents, students, and a testing and measurement consultant from a nearby university. Passing criteria have been tested and adjusted by the parish for three years, being officially adopted last fall. Passing criteria are being used in conjunction with student assessment results as a basis for the parish pupil progression plan which is approved by the State Department of Education. Even after three years, however, a number of teachers were found not to be using the criteria for recommending student promotion or retention. Most teachers attempt to vary or individualize instruction in accordance with the physical and mental maturity of their students. All elements of the program's scope and sequence are operating together to provide a solid curricular base to this area of instruction.



Figure 3. Example of a format for reporting results

| IMPROVEMENT GOAL | PARISH | |
|---|---|---|
| Improve the assessment of student performance in mathematics and language arts courses 7-12. | AREA | Math and Language Arts |
| | TARGET DATE | May, 1982 |

| STANDARDS | ACTIVITIES / RESOURCES | PERSONS RESPONSIBLE | SCHEDULE | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | BEGIN | END |
| 1.1.3 Math<br>1.1.3 Language Arts | 1. Call principals/department chairs to review current testing practices related to post-testing, pretesting, placement assessment, content validity, and reliability. | Supervisor, Elem. and Secondary | 5/1/81 | 6/15/81 |
| | 2. Call key teachers to see areas most in need of help. | " " | 5/15/81 | 6/15/81 |
| | 3. Contact consultant for inservice training session. (Possibilities: SPUR, Capital Area Consortium for Basic Skills, SDE Bureau of Evaluation, Southeastern Louisiana University, SDE Curriculum and Instruction) | Supervisor, Secondary | 6/1/81 | 6/30/81 |
| | 4. Plan inservice and schedule | " " | 7/1/81 | 7/31/81 |
| | 5. Conduct inservice/encourage joint test development within schools by teachers. | Consultant | 8/15/81 | 9/15/81 |
| | 6. Contact key teachers to see if they used pretests/placement tests. | Supervisors, Elem. and Secondary | 10/1/81 | 10/15/81 |
| | 7. Conduct follow-up inservice/work-sessions in individual schools or group session. | " " | 2/1/82 | 2/28/82 |
| | 8. Contact key teachers to see if they have post-tests developed and plan to use. | " " | 4/1/82 | 4/30/82 |
| | 9. Determine needs for further inservice on reliability and validity procedures. | Supervisor, Second. | 5/1/82 | 5/31/82 |
| | 10. Monitor activities 1-9. | " " | 5/1/81 | 5/31/82 |

Figure 4. Example of a completed action plan worksheet.

The PAAS System provides a methodology for a comprehensive instructional program review incorporating both student assessment results and instructional program standards. The methodology can be used by district and state personnel in planning essential changes in instructional programs to improve the quality of education. This system should be of interest to any district or state concerned with structured mechanisms for improving educational programs.